VIReC RESEARCHERS' GUIDE TO VA DATA

VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

DATA ISSUES BRIEF   February 2009

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VIReC UPDATES

1. VIReC Presentations at 2009 VA HSR&D National Meeting in Data Issues Brief Special Edition
The *Data Issues Brief Special Edition: February 2009 VA HSR&D National Meeting* describes VIReC presentations at the VA Health Services Research & Development Service National Meeting, which takes place in Baltimore MD, February 11-13, 2009. The special edition also provides a link to the meeting agenda. VIReC Staff will be available at the meeting to answer researchers' questions about VA data and information systems. Further details can be found in the *Data Issues Brief Special Edition: February 2009 VA HSR&D National Meeting* at
http://www.virec.research.va.gov/References/DataIssuesBrief/DIB.htm.

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2. VIReC Call for Research Papers: Data Quality in VA Databases

The VA Information Resource Center (VIReC) invites abstracts for potential publication as original research manuscripts in a single-topic issue of *The Journal of Rehabilitation Research & Development* (JRRD). The issue will focus on data quality in VA and non-VA databases used for research on veterans. Common themes related to data quality include but are not limited to completeness, reliability, accuracy, timeliness, utility for research, and data quality issues arising from using combined VA and non-VA databases. Interested persons should submit an abstract of the proposed manuscript via e-mail to Arika.Owens@va.gov by April 20, 2009. Include "Data Quality Abstract" in the subject line.

Abstracts will be reviewed for thematic relevance and abstract guideline adherence. Authors of selected abstracts will be invited to submit the entire manuscript, per JRRD guidelines, available at http://www.rehab.research.va.gov/jour/jourindx.html. Submitted manuscripts will undergo the standard peer review process by JRRD editors and peer referees as defined by JRRD policy.

VA DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

3. Chief Health Informatics Office Announces Funding for Health Information Technology Innovations

The Chief Health Informatics Office of VHA's Office of Health Information in cooperation with VA's Office of Information and Technology is soliciting ideas that use health information technology to improve veterans' health care. Submissions are eligible to receive a one-time distribution between $10,000 and $250,000 of IT funds to produce a functional prototype. If you are interested in competing for funding, complete an online letter of intent by February 17, 2009. Innovators should send inquiries regarding this solicitation to VHAInnovation@va.gov. The full text of this solicitation, which includes a link to the letter of intent, is available in the VHA Innovators Listserv-L archive at http://www.listserv.va.gov/cgi-bin/wa.exe?A2=ind0901d&L=innovators-l&T=0&F=&S=&P=78.

4. Should VHA Continue Its DCG License?

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has used the Diagnostic Cost Group (DCG) risk adjustment method in several national programs for many years and researchers can access these risk scores from the Austin Information Technology Center. Currently the question has been raised whether the VHA should continue with its DCG license or possibly consider alternative methods, e.g., The Chronic Illness and Disability Payment System (CDPS) or the Episode Treatment Group (ETG). The VHA Support Services Center, which produces these DCG scores, is asking the VHA community to respond to two survey questions:

      (1) In which program areas do you utilize DCG besides the national programs (Primary Care Management Module, Hospital Grouping, Physician Productivity):

         a) budgeting;
         b) patient care quality and satisfaction;
         c) workload distribution;
         d) contracting; or
         e) other [please specify]?

      (2) On a scale of 1-10, how much effort would it take you to switch to the alternative methods (CDPS, ETG) with 10 being the most effort?

Survey feedback can be sent to sophie.lo@.va.gov before February 11, 2009.

5. Vital Status Data Sets Available from National Data Systems
The VA Vital Status data sets are open for new user access. These data sets combine information from multiple VA databases to create the most complete source of information on veterans' vital status and date of death. Because some of the data elements in the Vital Status data sets are provided by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), researchers must submit a request packet to the National Data Systems (NDS). For instructions on requesting access to the VA Vital Status data sets, see the address given in the Intranet version of the *February 2009 Data Issues Brief*. For general information about these data sets, (including source files, file contents, data dictionaries, and access information) see http://www.virec.research.va.gov/DataSourcesName/VitalStatus/VitalStatus.htm.

6. SAS Data Alert: Race Data
National Data Systems has issued a data alert regarding the RACE1–RACE7 variables in the SAS Medical Outpatient Encounter Datasets—also referred to as the Medical SAS Outpatient Event Datasets or SE Files. The full text of the data alert was posted December 18, 2008, on the VA's HSRData-L Listserv, which can be found in the HSRData-L archives on the VA Intranet at the address given in the Intranet version of the *February 2009 Data Issues Brief*. For questions regarding the HSRData-L Listserv, contact the VIReC Help Desk at virec@va.gov or 708–202–2413.

EDUCATION

7. VIReC Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar Series
Tuesday, March 17, Bonnie J Wakefield, PhD, RN, will present "Home Telehealth for Veterans with Heart Failure." Dr. Wakefield is Director, Health Services Research & Development Program, Harry S Truman Memorial Veterans Hospital, Columbia, MO, and Associate Professor, Sinclair School of Nursing, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO. Participants are welcome to join the cyber seminar on a "first come, first served" basis. VIReC Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminars take place on the third Tuesday of each month at 12 pm, ET. Further information on these seminars is available on VIReC's VA Internet Website at http://www.virec.research.va.gov/EducationResources/Seminars/Cyberseminars.htm. For questions, contact Joanne Stevens (joanne.stevens@va.gov), VIReC's Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar Coordinator.

8. ResDAC to Hold Workshops on the Use of Medicare Data
The Research Data Assistance Center (ResDAC) will be hosting the following workshops on the use of Medicare data. Registration for these workshops is open, and more information is available at http://www.resdac.umn.edu/Training/Workshops.asp.

- CMS 101: Introduction to the use of Medicare data for research
  - A basic workshop in Medicare administrative data
  - May 4–6, Minneapolis, MN

- CMS 102: Conducting Research with Medicaid Claims Data
  - A workshop to familiarize attendees with the use of Medicaid administrative data for research
  - Dates pending, Minneapolis, MN

- CMS 105: Using Cost Report Data for Research
  - A workshop providing technical training to use Medicare cost report data for health services research
  - June 2 or 3rd, Minneapolis, MN

CONFERENCES

9. Special VA/DoD Interest Group Session at VA HSR&D 2009 National Meeting
The VA/Department of Defense (DoD) interest group will meet on Friday, February 13, from 12–2 pm at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel immediately following the VA HSR&D 2009 National Meeting. VA HSR&D Director Seth Eisen, MD, MSC, and Mary Jo Pugh, PhD, RN—retired Air Force nurse and VA health services researcher in San Antonio—will co-chair the meeting. The session will be held in the Grand Ballroom Salon 3/4. No registration or fees are required for this special meeting. Researchers can send questions regarding the VA/DoD interest group meeting to Samantha Farrell at samantha.farrell@va.gov or call her at 202–461–1519.

CALL FOR PAPERS AND ABSTRACTS

10. AcademyHealth 2009 Annual Research Meeting: Interest Groups Call for Abstracts
AcademyHealth Interest Groups are calling for abstracts. Interest group meetings will be held on June 27 or on June 30, 2009, in conjunction with the AcademyHealth 2009 National Meeting in Chicago. The submission deadline for the Long Term Care Interest Group's call for papers is February 1, 2009. Abstracts are due February 16, 2009, for the Child Health Interest Group's call for abstracts; the Interdisciplinary Research Group on Nursing Interest Group's call for abstracts; the PHSR Interest Group's call for papers; and the State Health Research and Policy Interest Group's call for papers. More information is available at http://www.academyhealth.org/arm/adjunct/index.htm.

- **Data Issues Brief:** a monthly newsletter published by the VA Information Resource Center (VIReC) for the purpose of informing and updating VA researchers on current and pending happenings and changes regarding health data, databases, and medical informatics.
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